

Managing Allergies

Do you or a family member struggle with allergies?

September means back to school, and depending on where you live in Canada, allergy season. In this issue of *Change Your Way to Health!* we provide tips for managing pollen allergies and for managing food allergies at school.

Managing pollen allergies

More than 10 million Canadians suffer from sneezing, coughing, itching, runny noses, and watering eyes every spring, summer, and fall when tiny particles are released from trees, weeds, and grasses. These particles, known as pollen, hitch rides on currents of air and make unscheduled detours into human noses and throats triggering an allergic reaction. At this time of year, ragweed is the big culprit. Here are some tips to help manage pollen allergies:

- Wash your hair before you go to bed. Because pollen accumulates on your hair, washing it before you go to bed can keep it from getting on your pillow.
- Change your clothes as soon as you come indoors.
- Don't hang clothing or bed linens outdoors to dry.
- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning.
- Try to avoid being outdoors when pollen peaks. Pollen counts are highest in the late morning and early afternoon.
- Wear a mask and/or goggles when working in the yard.
- Monitor pollen counts and adjust outdoor activities accordingly. Dry windy days, especially after a rainy day, can be particularly high in pollen.
- Wash your pet often.
- Keep your house smoke-free.



Tips for managing food allergies

As many as 1.2 million Canadians may be affected by life-threatening allergies and these numbers are increasing, especially among children. Foods account for most children's allergies, with peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy, fish and seafood, wheat, eggs and milk being the most common. Many elementary schools are now restricting certain foods from student's lunches and parents are encouraged to follow school policies, even if their child is not allergic. If your child has a severe allergy, here are some tips:

- Inform the school cafeteria, teachers and other staff of what foods to avoid.
- Pack bag lunches.
- Have your child avoid classroom snacks and sharing food with friends.
- Send safe snacks to school anytime the classroom is having a party.
- Advocate for no eating policies on buses and in other settings where kids aren't supervised.
- Be aware of expiration dates and keep in contact with their allergist to insure that all medication, especially self-injectable epinephrine, is replaced prior to the expiration date.

Make a change!

Do you suspect you may be sensitive to certain foods? Symptoms of food sensitivities include fatigue, gas, bloating, mood swings, nervousness, and migraines. There is increasing evidence that food intolerances are more common and have a wider and more varied impact on our health than previously realized. The foods most likely to cause a toxic response include cow's milk, wheat, gluten-containing products, nuts, shellfish and fish, chocolate, caffeine, alcohol, and foods with artificial colorings or preservatives. If you think you have a sensitivity, it's a good idea to eliminate that food from your diet.



Individuals who have severe allergic reactions to a particular food need to be especially cautious because a food allergy can trigger potentially life-threatening anaphylactic shock. Approximately 1-2% of Canadians live with the risk of an anaphylactic reaction. Food is the most common cause of anaphylaxis, but insect stings, medicine, latex, or exercise can also cause a reaction. The victim may become uneasy, upset and red in the face. They may also develop a rapid heartbeat, prickling and itchiness in the skin, throbbing in the ears, sneezing, coughing and difficulty breathing. Shock may then follow and the person becomes cold, clammy and feels faint. If you see someone showing symptoms of anaphylactic shock, call 911 immediately and administer epinephrine if the person has some handy.

For more information on allergies, visit the Human Solutions website: www.humansolutions.ca go into Member Services and click on *Health and Wellness Companion*.

Keep in touch



We want your questions, comments, and suggestions.
E-mail us at changetohealth@humansolutions.ca.

For more information, to book a counselling session, or to access any of your EFAP services our Client Services Representatives are ready to speak with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English or French. All calls are completely confidential.

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